

United Nations



Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Secretary-General, welcoming release of American hostage Joseph Cicippio, says he is working on the freeing of all hostages and detainees before end of December.
- ◆ Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Cyrus Vance, meets Yugoslav parties in Belgrade; will call for return of European Community-led monitors to Dubrovnik.
- ◆ Differing approaches to ongoing changes in South Africa are advocated as General Assembly opens debate on apartheid; European Community defends lifting certain sanctions while others question removing pressure that had led to gains.
- ◆ Secretary-General informs President of Portugal of his decision to send Special Rapporteur of Human Rights Commission to East Timor to get "impartial" information about "tragic" events in Santa Cruz, on 12 November.
- ◆ Secretary-General reports recent increase in tension and hostilities in area of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; Irish soldier, killed on 15 November, is 101st casualty suffered by that Force.
- ◆ Social Committee says United Nations assistance in electoral processes is needed only in special circumstances.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told correspondents this morning that he hoped other hostage releases would follow the freeing of American hostage Joseph Cicippio. He said he hoped the release of two other American hostages held in Lebanon, Alann Steen and Terry Anderson, were not too far away.

In reply to questions by correspondents, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that he, personally, was paying the bill for the releases by exposing one of his "dearest colleagues to a very difficult situation". The Secretary-General was

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referring to Giandomenico Picco, his Personal Representative, who has been negotiating with the parties concerned about the release of all detainees. Mr. Picco "is there on the spot and he is risking a lot", the Secretary-General said.

In reply to another question, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said it would be a disappointment for him personally if the remaining hostages were not released before the end of December. He said he had already been in touch with people in the region to accelerate the release of the two remaining Americans as well as two German detainees. He was also working on the missing Israeli persons and on the number of Lebanese who are detained in the southern part of Lebanon.

Yesterday, it was announced at Headquarters that important progress had been made with regard to a solution of the issue of the Western hostages in Lebanon. Basic understanding had also been reached on a comprehensive approach to the remaining humanitarian issues, including that of the Lebanese detained without due process of law and that of the Israelis missing and dead in Lebanon.

The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance, was scheduled to meet today in Belgrade with General Kadijevic, Secretary of State for the National Defence of the Yugoslav Federal Army and Serbian President Milosevic.

A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that while in Belgrade, Mr. Vance was expected to urge all concerned to facilitate the return of the European Community-led monitors to Dubrovnik.

In comments to the press yesterday, Mr. Vance had underlined that the Yugoslav parties must comply with the provisions of Wednesday's Security Council resolution 721 (1991), which conditioned the deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation, with the full compliance by the Yugoslav parties, with the cease-fire agreement signed in Geneva on 23 November.

Also yesterday, Mr. Vance met with the local representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and was briefed on the accelerating relief operation to displaced persons.

"Apartheid is not yet dead", the Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid this morning told the General Assembly, as he opened the Assembly's debate on South Africa's racial policies.

Describing the political process inside South Africa as "halting, but sustained", Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), said the ultimate goal of eliminating apartheid had not yet been reached and the role of the international community was far from over, including its assistance in bringing to an end a climate of violence that threatened the democratic

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transition. Some States, he added, had been hasty in removing pressure on South Africa, pressure that had yielded great dividends in the past and should be maintained.

A few speakers this morning, however, defended the relaxation of certain sanctions against South Africa as a recognition of the progress that had been made in dismantling apartheid. For example, the representative of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that outdated statements, doctrines and resolutions benefited only those opposed to the process of democratic change in South Africa. The Assembly, he added, should reflect the positive developments and send a "signal of encouragement and hope" to all South Africans.

The Assembly is scheduled to consider tomorrow, 3 December, the appointment of the next Secretary-General before continuing its debate on apartheid. On Wednesday, 4 December, at 3 p.m., the Assembly will hear a statement by Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar about the financial crisis facing the United Nations. It will then continue its debate on apartheid.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has informed the President of Portugal, Mario Soares, of his intention to send a special emissary to East Timor to obtain "impartial" information about the incident in Santa Cruz on 12 November, at which over one hundred people were killed.

Before leaving Lisbon for New York over the weekend, the Secretary-General told the press that he had explained to the Portuguese President that the United Nations continued its work towards a "clear, independent and absolutely impartial outcome on the facts surrounding the tragic and very serious events in Santa Cruz."

The Secretary-General said he was sending Mr. Amos Waco, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Commission on Arbitrary Executions to East Timor and that he hoped the Indonesian Government would provide him with all the necessary facilities in order to fulfil his mission in "a perfectly impartial and independent way".

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The Secretary-General has informed the Security Council, in a special report dated 29 November, of the circumstances under which an Irish soldier of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was killed on 15 November. He was the one hundred and first casualty suffered by the UNIFIL as a result of hostile action or duty-related accidents and the twenty first such casualty suffered by the Irish contingent.

According to the Secretary-General's report, the incident has been strongly protested to the Israeli authorities both locally and in New York. It occurred in a period of heightened tension and hostilities between the

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Israeli Defence Force and armed Lebanese elements in the UNIFIL area of operation. The UNIFIL was conducting a full investigation but has already established that no weapon was fired by any UNIFIL soldiers and that the United Nations was not therefore responsible for the death of the Irish soldier.

The Secretary-General said in his report that in order to reduce hostilities and prevent additional casualties in the Force, he had proposed to the Israeli Government that it withdraw its personnel from the most affected positions, which would then be taken over by the UNIFIL.

The General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) approved on Friday a draft resolution noting that United Nations assistance in electoral processes was needed only in special circumstances.

Under the text, the Assembly would reaffirm that it was the concern solely of the peoples to determine methods and to establish institutions regarding the electoral process and that any activities that attempted to interfere in the free development of that process violated the spirit and letter of the Charter. The draft would also have the Assembly recognize that there was no universal need for the United Nations to provide electoral assistance to Member States except in special circumstances and would strongly appeal to States to refrain from financing or providing any other form of overt or covert support to undermine the electoral process in any country.

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